

THE MORAL REFORMER.

No. 6.

JUNE 1, 1831.

Vol. I.

PRIMITIVE AND MODERN CHRISTIANITY, PRIMITIVE AND
MODERN TEACHERS, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE EFFECTS UPON
SOCIETY.

DEEPLY impressed with the prevalence of vice, and with the unchecked reign of moral evil, I have from time to time endeavoured to describe its workings in the different circles of society. I have also frequently hinted, that though the professed object of all religions is to destroy sin, yet in this country, the most popular of them have not only failed in their object, but stand chargeable with being its promoters. Here we find the same paradoxical state of things in spirituals as in temporals: in the midst of super-abounding wealth, poverty and wretchedness prevail; and in the midst of a profusion of religious privileges, depravity and crime disgrace the land. In attempting an explanation of the reasons why the religions of the day do not answer the object of their appointment, I may probably appear to some severe; but I owe it to the cause I have espoused, not to shrink from the truth, whatever may be the result. If, with the present systems, I could see the probability of a successful conflict against the powers of evil, most happy should I be to abandon so unpleasant an office as that of censurer, and to join in promoting the furtherance of the popular plans. Of this, however, I have not the least hope.

Good laws, and the best civil arrangements, are calculated in part to remove vice; but the rational and *consistent diffusion* of *primitive christianity*, is the only *effectual* remedy. This power attacks the root of the evil; it begins with the heart; is universally applicable; and by its effects has proved itself to be—"the power of God." In the hands of its first agents, it "prevailed mightily," was effectual in pulling down strong holds, and sub-

duing every opposing power. Unlike the Jewish, or any worldly system of religion, which derives its influence from external grandeur, worldly policy, or human power, it appealed to the understanding and the heart, and, by the sanctions of an unseen world, made the most abandoned sinners to tremble. Alike adapted to Jew and Gentile, it proclaimed peace, and forgiveness, and eternal life to all; unlimited in its operations, and possessing a character equally suited to men of every clime, it knew no limits of space but that of "every nation;" nor time, but "the end of the world." It needed no eulogist, it required not the praise of man; in the face of insidious friends, and in the front of hostile foes, opposed by the combined power and wealth of all the great and influential in every place, it not only set at defiance their puny efforts, but took possession of the hearts of myriads of the people. Its success was a miracle in itself, and is a standing proof of the divinity of its claims.

If such was its native greatness, and such the effects it produced, how is it that now, with its name as the basis of all our institutions, as part and parcel of the law of the land, as recognized in all our social intercourse, as patronised by the highest authorities of the state, distributed by civil sanctions all over the country, advocated by thousands officially devoted to its interests, supported by the nation's treasury, and by the most liberal contributions, rendered fascinating by splendid temples and by every sensible attraction,—how is it, that with all these, and with the civil power in its favour for fifteen centuries, our religion has lost its inherent power of giving life to the world, and of turning men from sin and Satan unto God? How is it, that profanity, lewdness, drunkenness, extortion, oppression, hypocrisy, and every vice, both secret and open, prevail in all classes of society? Excepting in name, that which now intrudes itself upon us as christianity is totally unlike the system whose powerful effects upon the world was compared to a "new creation." It is in *this change* alone that we find an answer to the above enquiries. It is here the unbeliever stumbles; the religion of the age condemns itself by its own enormities, and, taking no pains to enquire further, he considers that the whole is a "cunningly devised fable."

The change which has taken place must be obvious to every one who will glance for a moment at the principal means by which the present system is supported, and from which it derives all its anti-christian influence. *Power, wealth, and fash-*

ion, have moulded religion after their own likeness, and are now propagating a spurious article under a genuine name. As real christianity was always repulsive to these agencies, nothing but a deep corruption in its vital parts, could have enlisted them into its service. "My kingdom," said the Saviour, "is not of this world;" and hence, no worldly means were ever admitted as its auxiliaries, either to defend or to extend it. The great object being to produce conviction in the mind, and *all-giance* in the heart, the means of worldly influence were useless; the interests of this kingdom require not, they admit not, the assistants which belong to an earthly hierarchy. For what purpose, then, all this power, influence, wealth, and fashion, all alike unknown to primitive christianity? As it is evidently *not* the good of mankind, or the spread of real religion, other unworthy ends must be had in view. There was nothing in the religion of the first christians upon which these influences could be made to bear; as well might they have attempted to mix iron and clay, as to mix up the influence of power or wealth with the legitimate objects of primitive christianity. All the facts of the case confirm this. Poverty, and a humble station in life, was the voluntary choice of Jesus himself, and he selected for his assistants men of the same condition. He disdained the appearance of earthly authority, and, at the risk of his life, taught a doctrine which was universally hated by men in power. His apostles, walking in the same steps, were treated as the "offscouring of all things." They were opposed by the wealthy and the great, and they, as faithfully, opposed the reigning vices of the age. All that was influential in the world was arrayed against them, and they never thought of modifying their course so as to make their teaching more palatable to carnal men. If their religion had consisted of a priestly order with costly robes, a pompous ritual service, performed in splendid temples made with hands, such as is now palmed upon us for christianity, money would certainly have been (as it is now) the one thing needful. If it had consisted in uniting nations together, in conformity to articles of faith and worship, and claiming a domineering ascendancy in society, earthly power would have been indispensable. But, aiming only to affect the mind by heavenly principles, and to change the conduct by divine sanctions, and seeking no ostensible greatness beyond the personal conviction and reformation of mankind, not Cæsar himself could facilitate its progress.

These remarks have often been confirmed by writers on the evidences of christianity, but I am astonished that they have not seen that their own arguments are a clear condemnation of the means now made use of for propagating religion. If the christianity of the New Testament claims our confidence, on account of the spirituality of the means by which it was established, the adoption of opposite means now, is calculated to persuade us that the cause, though the same in name, is materially different. It is in the nature of all institutions, connected with human agency, to decay, and the lapse of eighteen centuries has produced such changes here, as few are sufficiently unprejudiced to concede. Poverty, persecution, and reproof, have been succeeded by prosperity, wealth, and honours,—labour and self-denial have been changed for ease and luxurious indulgence,—personal piety for ritual services, and uniform obedience for the religion of times and places,—candour and sincerity for imposture, fraud and hypocrisy,—universal love for avarice and selfishness,—and sensual gratification and present enjoyment, for that lively hope of a better world, which supported the first christians. Let it not be said that any of these changes are necessary on account of the cessation of *miracles*. If either wealth, or power, or influence, could be considered as substitutes, miracles had not been necessary, for these could have been commanded; and whilst it is quite clear that the conviction of the unbeliever was the effect of the one, the opposite is constantly the effect of the other. Christianity is not of yesterday, its authenticity is demonstrable, and therefore we neither require, nor can have, any substitute for the primitive miracles. The corruptions I speak of were introduced gradually, and without any design of making up for the loss of miracles; a rapacious clergy, with selfish and worldly designs, laboured to mould religion after the maxims of the world, through which they could foresee the wealth and honours of their order. Viewing things thus in their consequences, Nero, the cruel tyrant, was a greater friend to christianity than Constantine the Great. He persecuted and destroyed, it is true, but the seed that was left was pure; but Constantine corrupted the whole mass, and centuries of superstition, cruelty, and murder, have degraded religion, in consequence of the unholy alliance of church and state, of which he was the author.

Though other powers have infused the leaven of corruption, and though the people have blindly yielded to the change, the

CLERGY have been the principal authors of all the evil. Their character, in the aggregate, is so well understood, that it is unnecessary to attempt a description. The great evil is that, instead of being actuated by a simple wish to promote the glory of God and the good of man, and of being content with, and relying upon, the innate power and principle of christianity itself, they have given way to the operation of selfish motives, and have sought alliances with the idols of the world, in order to gain their unhallowed ends. Many also of the laity (so called) either with a mistaken view of making religion respectable, or from the pride of party competition, which at present runs very high, or sometimes as a pecuniary speculation, have appended to religion so much of the "glory of the world," that the veriest worldling among us is ready to do it homage. Take christianity as it is in the New Testament, and what a poor, naked creature it appears, as it respects this world; but behold it in the nursery of kings, in the keeping of the clergy, and amidst the caresses of its rich friends, and it rises to a splendid, powerful, domineering hierarchy, before which every man is expected to fall down and worship. The spouse of Christ has committed fornication with the kings of the earth, who, by adorning her with meretricious ornaments, have tempted the amours of all the great and noble of the land. But let the impartial reader take the New Testament in his hand, and study the genius of the system developed there, then turn to the popular establishments around him, and if he do not discover—in the appointment of an earthly head—the ruling of churches by acts of parliament—the wealth, titles, and honours of the clergy,—the order of bishops, and their holy courts—the splendour of churches and chapels—the pompous celebration of ceremonies—and the compulsory demands of large sums of money for religion,—if he do not discover in these a mass of corruption unknown to the apostles, and inimical to the existence of pure christianity, I will bear the blame of a calumniator for ever.

Passing from general observations, I propose noticing, the difference between the primitive and modern teachers, in reference to their *qualifications—employment—and remuneration*. I fix on these particulars, because I find they stand connected with almost every other objectionable matter; and that, if these were reformed, every other improvement would follow as a matter of course. Nine-tenths of the squabbles in every denomination, either originate with the preachers,

or have some connection with them. Get a primitive "ministry" and every other evil will be good to manage.

Qualifications.—No employer would think of engaging a servant before he had first satisfied himself as to his fitness. That such is not the case in reference to religious teachers it were useless to affirm. If, indeed, their work principally consisted in reading over ready-made prayers, or pronouncing sermons from the pulpit, some of them may lay a claim to a fitness for office; but if we derive our views of the work of a teacher either from scriptural example, or from the necessity of the case, we shall come to a different conclusion. In the first place, the motives of a teacher should be purely love to God and love to man; in the next place, he should reject all formality and will worship, and, in zeal for the interests of Christ's kingdom, be determined to find his way to sinners of every class, and with earnestness and sincerity, day and night, to call them to repentance. Is it to be supposed that men of this character are to spring from noble families; or that those who select "the Church" for their sons, have any such view of the work of christian pastors? Is it not on these occasions, purely a question of pecuniary calculation? And is this not the simple reason why a black gown is preferred to a red jacket? If they had read the scriptures attentively, and had learned that, so far from teaching being a "learned profession," persons thus engaged are compared to "soldiers—shepherds—ploughers—sowers—labourers—and husband-men," the idea of putting forward Master John for such a thankless drudgery, would vanish into wind. "Livings" are the things in request; these secured, the dullest collegian is qualified to enjoy them. Indeed, here is the prevailing mistake; we constantly blame the clergy for not doing their duty, when, in fact, they *cannot* do it. Some of them may be able to expatiate upon the doctrines of the church, and most of them to read over the regular services appointed, but to labour after the primitive model, they are totally unqualified. Is it in the nature of things, that the sons of gentlemen who pass their days in luxury and excess, are likely to go about teaching the people self-denial and an abandonment of the world?

The dissenting teachers are generally chosen from their societies, without much reference to birth or wealth; and being, for the most part, persons of piety, and of observed usefulness, stand well, in the first instance, as to qualifications; and, if they were

continued in their own spheres, many of them would be burning and shining lights ; but unfortunately (and I speak it as the result of twenty years' close observation) they are removed to the *academies*, where, as to plain, useful, zealous, disinterested labourers, they are entirely *spoiled*. The old ministers are nearly all gone, and I leave it to every plain man among the dissenters to say, whether, with all the expence of accomplishing these academies, instead of any symptoms of increased usefulness, they are not often disgusted with the fulsome pride and vanity of these young divines. Plain John soon becomes—The *Reverend*,—his plain dress and manners are changed for the fopperies of fashion,—the man who delighted to teach in a cellar becomes ambitious of being a pulpit luminary,—his disinterested feelings give way to the sound of a nice round salary and a comfortable house,—the lad that left his father's house with all the rusticity of a country life, returns metamorphosed into an exquisite gentleman, and, in a few years, his very shadow is picked up, to grace the front of "The Evangelical." For fashionable religion this is indispensable, but for doing real and extensive good to the souls of men, I regard it as the most *unqualifying* process that could be attempted. Learning, it will be said, is absolutely requisite. If by learning is meant the study of Horace and Homer, Euclid and Bonnycastle, I beg to dissent ; but if it be meant that a man should be able to speak sensibly and forcibly to his fellow sinners in his own language, I produce a host who never studied beneath the academic bower. Natural talents are not scarce, and, as they are greatly improved by exercise, it often strikes me, that if the way were *sufficiently open*, speakers would emanate from most of our congregations. Talents lie dormant, disinterested zeal is not encouraged ; and, while preaching is a trade, and going to an academy an indispensable apprenticeship, the present hands will take care to prevent too great a supply in the market. Some may be offended at this language, but I declare plainly, that in my opinion, it is the system of *hirelingism*, that prevents the world from enjoying the benefit of the most useful talents, possessed by individuals both in and out of the establishment. The system of local preaching among the Methodists, approaches to an exception, and I hope they will never suffer any encroachment upon this privilege. But why reason while so many *facts* before us proclaim the unfitness of our present teachers ? The ascendancy of vice, the unchecked wickedness, the latent and

open infidelity of the people, prove, not merely that our present teachers *neglect* their duty, but that they are *not qualified* to perform it. It is not from Oxford or Cambridge, or from the dissenting academies, that we are to expect men likely to reform the world. These may do to preside over respectable congregations, or to move and second resolutions at public meetings, but they are not the men to send into the highways and hedges, to plough up the fallow ground. Most of our benevolent and religious institutions have arisen entirely from the incompetency of the clergy, and are intended to do that which they have left *undone*. Thus, many zealous laymen, have not only to pay the minister, but actually to assist in doing his work besides. So convinced am I of the want of proper qualifications on the part of our ministers, that I think they are objects of pity rather than censure, and that in future, instead of finding fault with *them*, I shall blame the *system* that brings them into office. This distinction I take to be important; for we can scarcely read a newspaper, or get into any sort of company, but, without investigating the cause, we find the clergy censured for neglect of duty. As well might we expect a corporation to be honest to the public, or the members of it to patronize our temperance societies, as the present class of religious teachers to engage to do the work of the primitive ministers. This will be still more obvious if we consider what should constitute their

Employment.—Extensively as the bible has been circulated, it is astonishing how inattentive most readers are as to matters of fact. Numbers believe at this moment, that what takes place in our churches and chapels on a sunday, is just what was practised in the primitive meetings; hence their present views of the duties of teachers, and hence their slowness to detect the impositions which are constantly palmed upon them. What constituted the work of the primitive teachers? We may take a two-fold view of it, corresponding to the characters to be taught. The first part consisted in teaching “the nations,—the world,—and every creature,” as it is expressed in our Lord’s commission:—the second, in instructing, admonishing, and exhorting the societies which were formed in different places. Of the first class, Jesus himself was the example, and the work was carried on by the twelve apostles, and those who were chosen in different places to assist them. These, properly speaking, were missionaries. They went from place to place, from city to city, and wherever they found

men ignorant and depraved, there was their work pointed out. Time and place made no difference,—in the synagogues, by the sea side, on a mountain, in a ship, at a publican's table, in the temple, on Mars Hill, by the way side, or in the market place, they were equally ready to instruct the people. Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, were what they shewed and taught publicly, and from house to house, both to Jews and Greeks. (Acts XX, 20, 21.) Had I room, I could fill pages with quotations of the apostolic labours in this respect. Paul says, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first to rise from the dead,—I shewed, first to them at *Damascus*, then at *Jerusalem*, and throughout all the coasts of *Judea*, and then to the gentiles, that men should repent and return to God, and do works meet for repentance."

(Acts XXVI, 20—23.) Ever bearing in mind that their commission was "go," they did not fix upon a place and wait, if peradventure the people would come and hear them, but they went among them, and such were their labours, and such was the agitation they produced, that when they entered certain places, it was said "they that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Would to God that we had a few such men in Britain, and that, in this respect, our world was also turned upside down! The effect was, that "great multitudes believed and turned to the Lord." These had to be instructed in the way of God more perfectly, and to be taught all things whatsoever Christ had commanded, and this is the second part. For this purpose, the apostles appointed from among the societies, "faithful men who should be able to teach others also." These were appointed to "watch for their souls as those who should give account, and to take the charge of the flock, not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind." There was a number of these teachers to every congregation, and though they were plain men, and distinguished only from their brethren by their age, experience, and zeal, and though they worked with their own hands for their support, they are the persons constantly recognised by the name of "bishops," (or overseers.) What a mighty contrast betwixt these and a mitred lord, lawn sleeves, a carriage and four, and five fat livings! Diocesan

bishopricks were not then invented; and such is the perversion of christianity, that now we have a number of churches to one bishop, whilst the primitive christians had a *number of bishops to one church!* The qualifications and duties of these worthy characters are pointed out in 1st Tim. III, 1—7. Tit. I, 5—9. Acts XX, 17—35, and ought to be consulted by every person who wishes to learn what constitute the duties of christian teachers. These societies seem to have had no idea of erecting temples, or of establishing a ritual service. Nothing is said about building “places of worship,” nor is it ever hinted that it was a part of their “manifold sufferings” that they were not allowed to do so. As to teaching the world, they went and *sought* them out; and, as it respected their own edification, they met as friends in their own houses, or in upper rooms, without any ostentation, and taught and admonished each other in simplicity and godly sincerity. These were the golden days, and my heart sickens when I turn to the contrast in the nineteenth century. I will not weary the reader’s patience with tracing the employment of our “bishops, priests, and deacons;” for this would be to recite a list of doings, which are either sinful in themselves, or at least tend to neutralize the real object of the christian ministry. If the magnanimous Paul were permitted to visit this country, as at Athens, his spirit would be stirred in him to see the people and the clergy given up to the idolatry of the world.

I cannot conclude this part, without entering my decided protest against the universal mode of teaching by sermons. No plan ever tended more to pervert the true meaning of the scriptures, to keep the people in ignorance, or to encourage the idleness of teachers. It is without any analogy, in the whole course of communicating knowledge, upon any subject whatever. It is condemned by every page of the evangelists and the acts of the apostles. Paul never taught by sermons, nor do I think he was capable of such a drivelling method. Though we hear of “Christ’s *sermon* on the Mount,” yet, if we examine this discourse, it was any thing but a sermon. Rational teaching consists in ascertaining what the people are ignorant of, and, with plainness and sincerity, communicating such information as they need, without any circuitous rout of imparting knowledge; and not in taking a detached sentence, or part of

a sentence, and dividing and subdividing, till the words are exhausted, a great part of which are frequently strained beyond the real meaning and design of the writer. Indeed, the whole is looked upon rather as an effort of *ability* than as intended to convey seasonable advice. It is the man's *delivery* that is admired, and it is for this he is paid ; as for his sermons, if they should get to a book stall, their true value is ascertained : they are the last thing a person would think of purchasing. Any man, if he can keep his mouth open, may preach a sermon ; for, if he has not sufficiently studied "the rules for the composition of a sermon," he can supply himself with volumes of "skeletons ;" and, for the "divines of the church of England," there are plenty full grown ; not only with bones and sinews, but covered with flesh and skin, and struck off in "lithography," for the purpose of deceiving the people. Twenty of these "exact imitations" can be had for thirty shillings. I am astonished that our dissenting ministers are not ashamed of spending so much time in studying sermons, and preaching them to sleepy congregations, instead of going about talking to the people *plainly*, telling them [of their sins, and warning them to repent. I am happy to say that there are many exceptions, but these persons, in their zeal for the good of their hearers, are apt to ramble from their texts, and are not considered good preachers.

I can but briefly notice a few *accompanying circumstances*, connected with teaching the people. In every sense, the religion of Christ was opposed to *ceremony*, but it was soon corrupted, and a distinction of times, and places, and ritual performances, soon became prominent. Though the church of England parried off a little from the catholic stock, and though dissenters have cast away a much larger portion, yet we are still fond of pomp and ceremony ; the men of this generation still love to be priests, and to magnify their office by some exclusive service. They carry a peculiar air, are solemnly ordained as a separate order from the people, have a special place to administer in, are clothed with sacerdotal attire, and always accompany their teaching with a round of devotional exercises. They seem to have no idea of that plain, homely, every-day, every-place instruction, which we so much need ; but every piece of instruction must be a *sermon*,

delivered at a fixed time, and accompanied by a certain number of hymns and prayers. The consequence is, that instead of getting access to thousands, they have to speak to as many dozens; instead of meeting with fresh hearers in every place, the same persons come and sit under the sound of the gospel, till, to use their own phrase, they are "gospel hardened." Give me the man, whose heart is warm; whose soul is pure; whose motives have never been corrupted by the love of lucre; whose ardour was never damped with the chilling blasts of academic learning; who, ignorant of the petty arts of embellishing truth, and regardless of his own ease or gain, studies the condition of man, beholds his misery and his woe, and makes every sacrifice for his welfare; rustic in his habits, and clad in his own apparel, visits every abode of vice and wickedness; and, whether to two or three, or to hundreds or thousands, unceasingly devotes his time and his strength in promoting the happiness and salvation of mankind!

Remuneration.—If a man is justified in becoming a minister from the same motives which lead others to become doctors or lawyers, I cannot blame any of those who, by studious preparation, by the influence of friends, by an exhibition of their powers, by changing stations and listening to fresh "calls," make the very *best* of their speculation. If a "preached gospel" is to be sold, there is nothing in the world that deserves so high a price, and if a man is at liberty to bargain for a hundred a year, I know of no principle which forbids him to take *five*. Indeed, it is the supposed possession of this *invaluable* treasure, that has given priests, in all ages, such an ascendancy over both the minds and the pockets of the people; for, rather than be deprived of what is so consoling both in life and death, they would submit to receive it upon any terms the priests might propose. Having extended this article already beyond what I intended it, I must be excused in this place from attempting to dive into the unfathomable abyss of church livings and church property; a task not only requiring Herculean strength, but a greater share of patience than I pretend to possess. I shall content myself, therefore, with attempting to trace out the primitive example, contrasting it occasionally with matters as they now stand.

To come to any satisfactory view upon this point, we must

bear in mind the *sort* of work which the first christians had to perform, and what it was, on account of which they may appear to have been paid. We find that the primitive teachers are constantly called *labourers*. It appears to me that we are under a great mistake as to what the scriptures call *labour*. We call composing and preaching sermons, labour; but it is quite clear that this was applied, not to any process of speaking, but principally to the toil and hardships which accompanied their travelling from place to place. To "preach" we are assured by the best critics,* means primerly to "proclaim" like a crier, and therefore if we would learn what that *labour* is which is entitled to its hire, we are not to fix upon one of our ministers, pronouncing a neat, compact discourse from a pulpit, but upon the apostles, travelling from place to place, from city to city, and I may venture to say, from street to street, proclaiming "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mat. X, 7—14.) How words change their applications! That which was once applied to the proclamation of a single fact, is now confined to the delivery of an expository discourse from the pulpit. In that noted passage, 1st Corin. IX, where it is said, "those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," it is evident that what is meant by preaching is a course of toil and labour unknown to modern apostles. Who or what are these teachers compared to? to gentlemen, counsellors, magistrates, esquires, or lords of parliament? No, no; but to *soldiers, vine-dressers, shepherds, ploughers, thrashers*;—nay, to "the ox that treadeth out the corn;" and I suppose it will be unnecessary for me to say, that those who were thus employed should "live" and not die. I shall be the last man that will ever grudge our preachers a living, on these terms. No man in the apostolic days, I believe, ever received any thing merely on account of his office, talents, or wisdom, but *exclusively* on account of that *toil and labour* which were requisite to plant the gospel in every nation under heaven.

But I must remark, that what they received was rather a matter of *necessity*, than of choice. Paul himself assures us in this same chapter, "that he had used none of these things—

* See Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations.

that he had been determined "to preach the gospel WITHOUT CHARGE;" and in other places he affirms, "that he had preached unto them the gospel of God FREELY;"—"for, labouring night and day," says he, "because *we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*" (2nd Cor. XI, 7—9.—1st Thes. II, 9.) In his admirable farewell address to the bishops of Ephesus, he says, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know that *THESE HANDS have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.* I have shewed you all things, how that *so labouring, ye* (bishops!) *ought to support the weak,* and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, (and not to apply them to others, instead of yourselves,) that it is more blessed to GIVE than to RECEIVE. (Acts, XX.) These passages neither require note or comment, they develop the noble spirit of an apostle, and condemn the worldly, mercenary, avaricious conduct of that order which has long trampled the essence of religion beneath its feet. When Paul was settled at a place, as at Corinth, (Acts XVIII. 1--3,) and had opportunities for working at his business, he did so; on other occasions, when in "necessity" or "want," he received assistance. Just upon the same principle, the disciples who were sent through all the cities of Israel, were told "that into whatsoever house or city they entered, and were well received, they were to remain, eating and drinking such things as were set before them, for the labourer was worthy of his hire." To such a principle of remuneration, I repeat, every good man will give his hearty consent. But here let me remark, there were no ready-made "livings," either large or small; no "salaries" of so much a year; no "calls" with the amount attached to them; no "bonds" for the payment in full; no uneasiness betwixt minister and people on money matters; no pretexts of "increased usefulness" to get to a better place! I maintain, then, first, that the only support received by the first teachers was as a matter of *necessity*; secondly, that it was *casual*; and thirdly, it was *voluntary*. Nothing that could by possibility approach to compulsion was allowed. When the apostles required assistance, their wants were readily supplied by the churches; (Philipp. IV, 10—19) but from the people among whom there was the least murmuring or suspicion,

they would receive no help, even though they were labouring for them. (2nd Cor. XI, 7—10.) All was voluntary, and such was the trifling amount required to assist these worthy men (for the tree of life did not then grow in a *silvery soil*, and the "want of funds," were terms not known,) that the noble example of *relieving the poor* meets us in every part of the New Testament. I have made diligent search, and I can find no other object for which collections were made by the first christians. The audacious libels upon christianity, and the abominable impositions upon the people, under the heads of *tithes*, *dues*, and *church-taxes*, are such as surely never can continue long. From no party ought ministers to expect support, unless their labours be such as to merit it *voluntarily* at the hands of the people. My conclusion under this head is this, that *church and chapel exercises* performed on the *sabbath*, ought not to be paid for; but if a congregation, in addition to their numerous and gratuitous instructors, (whom they ought to have from their own body) think proper to encourage a person or persons (for I generally find two together) to employ their *whole time*, in teaching and preaching, and labouring for the spiritual welfare of society, either in town or country, they ought to make up any deficiency in the support, which such individuals may receive from those amongst whom they labour. And I am sure, if they were as faithful and as laborious as they ought to be, such would be the readiness of people to assist them, that neither taxing seats, nor any other similar measure, would ever be requisite. The fact is, that corrupt as we are, where a man is found discharging honestly and zealously the real duties of a servant of Christ, the greatest danger is, (and all history confirms the fact) that he will be corrupted by the excessive kindness of those who benefit by his labours. The best "bond" is the peoples' affections; and the only way to secure it is the conscientious discharge of those duties, the effects of which are seen in the moral and religious improvement of society.

In conclusion, I observe, that at present religion is nearly all *outside work*,—a system of *automotonomism* which unites, both in teacher and people, a *form* of godliness with a love of the world; Power may invent and patronize forms and ceremonies, and fill the country with the externals of devotion; wealth may give them an imposing and a deceitful appearance, whilst the essence of religion,—piety and devotedness to God, charity and benevolence to man, and a strict attention to all the duties of life—is

rarely to be found. And, while religion is made the *medium of wealth* to the clergy, these effects are sure to follow. Corruption acts reciprocally; the church and the world keep each other in countenance; the moral hemisphere is terribly over-clouded, and, until heaven be pleased to develop the genius of a purer age, men will continue to "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." J. L.

VARIETIES.

Scales for the Poor.—Contracted as are the means of the poor, they are often still more reduced by the deceptions which are practised upon them. They are often gulled by *cheap* articles, which, considering their inferior qualities, are really dearer than those which are purchased for something more in price. In *weight* also, many impositions are practised; for, in some articles, a half-penny less in price is made up by an ounce less in weight. Bags of coals, which are called a hundred weight, I know, are frequently not more than ninety pounds. Now, how are the poor to defend themselves? They cannot afford to keep scales to weigh every article they buy. To remedy this evil, persons have been appointed as juries to *inspect* weights and measures. This is but a partial check, and is easily eluded. The only permanent cure for short weights would be to afford every person a convenient opportunity of weighing every article he purchases. This might be effected by *establishing a set of scales in two or three different parts of a town, for the free use of the people*. Something more than the expenses of the present juries would be sufficient, and no small sum, defrayed by the county rate, could be better applied.—We want a reformed magistracy as well as a reformed parliament; and then we might hope that regulations like this would sometimes get beyond the existence of mere suggestions.

Churching of Women.—Among the remnants of superstition is the notion that women, after child-bed, ought not to be seen abroad till they are *churched*. By this foolish idea, delicate females make a sudden change of a *warm* room for a *cold* church, and numerous are the instances of its pernicious effects. Would not a thanksgiving in the closet be as acceptable as in the church? But if it be desirable to make a public acknowledgment, instead

of on a friday, when there is no congregation, why not defer it till a more distant day, when the people would be assembled, and when the women would be quite stout?

Inhumanity of the Poor Laws.—An instance of this lately occurred; the particulars are as follows:—A miserable female, in an advanced state of pregnancy, took up her lodgings at a lodging house in this town. One of the overseers gave strict orders that she should be sent away, lest the child should be born and belong to the town. Some delay occurred; she was delivered in the place, and but for the prompt attention of a female neighbour, she would have been totally without assistance, and without any bed to lie upon. And though the owner of the house was entreated to give her a lodging, lest the overseers should get to know, the miserable woman was turned out the same night—A proof of the working of the abominable settlement law.

Chester Races.—Though it is about twenty years since I was at a race, being detained at Chester on thursday, the 5th ult., and the race course adjoining the city walls, as I had frequently spoken against this sport, I embraced the opportunity of taking a full view of the whole affair. And though I am willing to allow that persons may go and return without any bad motives, yet, reviewed altogether as to their effects upon society, vice and misery are the inevitable effects of the races. Unfortunately, where wealth is bestowed, there is generally but little intellect, and often less moral principle. What answer will our sporting gentlemen be able to give at the last day, for lavishly squandering away their property in maintaining blood horses, and upholding a system of gaming and debauchery? Upon the leading men, must fall, in the first place, the charge of this guilt. There is no harm, I readily admit, in people enjoying a holiday, or leaving their employments for a little relaxation, but this should never be connected with evil temptations to themselves or others. It is true, that at the races there may be pleasure for the time, but the *after reflections* are the surest criterion: in many instances it is only necessary to ascertain these to know the value of the races.—Viewing the immense mass of people collected, and having visited the stands, and camps, and hovels of every sort, I thought the whole of the people might be fairly divided into the following classes:—the genteel—the rogues and vagabonds—the outwardly vicious—and the quiet, indifferent, spectators. The first included most of the wealth, rank and fashion of

the county. The gentlemen seemed to enter into the meeting with all their life and soul, and were sporting their money fluently; the ladies, in a long train of carriages, looked on with great composure. To females, the opportunity of displaying their dress and ornaments, is probably the greatest temptation. If, instead of supporting these tumultuous sports and barbrous pleasures, these persons, who possess so much of this world's goods, would employ their time, influence, and money, in promoting the comfort, contentment, and happiness of the classes below them, and avoid setting them so bad an example, what a happy change we should soon experience! The second class consisted of a collection of gamblers, rogues, and fools of all sorts; such as, I should suppose, could be found in no place in the world but on a race ground. Every art of deception, enticement, and swindling, was put into practice; organized gangs of genteel robbers were constantly on the alert; and sovereigns were tossed about as if they were of no more value than button tops. Men, women, and children were fixed to allure and to rob the unwary visitor. The races bring together the very scum of society, and yet the rich and the respectable (so called) are not ashamed to be seen in their company. An attempt was made to put down the gamblers, but it was as feeble, as it was probably, insincere. These men reap a rich harvest from the gullibility of our countrymen. The third were those who, in every place, as well as at the races, embrace every opportunity of indulging in sensual excesses, and violating every law of decorum and propriety. The public houses and tents were filled with these, and in the evening many of them were strolling in the streets, to the annoyance of every peaceable person. The fourth class was made up of those who, without being enamoured of the races, leave their homes or business, just to enjoy an afternoon's relaxation. Many of these were farmers servants, who come more "to see and be seen," than from any other motive. These conduct themselves with propriety, and return peaceably home; and, at first sight, I have no doubt it appears to many that in going to the races in this manner there is no evil. But let me observe to such, that the increase of immorality and vice, to an awful extent,—that the misery and ruin of many individuals and families,—that worldly mindedness and an unfitness for death—are fostered and promoted by the races to a serious extent; and that, therefore, it is decidedly wrong to countenance them. If there be a record in heaven of the guilty actions of

men, I fear there will be a black page, headed—"CHESTER RACES."

Preston Races.—The cockings in Preston are finally abandoned; and it is probable the races will share the same fate. So far, I think, the result of a late election may be considered a permanent good. Still I should be sorry, if, on this account, our spinners, mechanics, apprentices, and sunday-school children, should loose their midsummer holiday. I know their confinement is so severe, and their opportunities for relaxation so very few, that it would be considered a great misfortune to loose the day or two they have generally had during the races. Let the men adopt, in good time, the likeliest means to secure the continuance of this privilege; and their masters, I hope, will not deny so reasonable an indulgence. And, if the men will only act a rational part, they will find a thousand ways of spending their time without being exposed to the temptations of a race ground.

Corporations.—Various societies and orders of men have arisen out of the peculiar circumstances of the times which gave them birth. They answered the end of their appointment with utility to the public, so long as the circumstances of society continued the same; beyond that they often become nuisances, and press as an incubus upon the aspiring feelings of the nation. This applies forcibly to those bodies of men called CORPORATIONS; and, if they could but see themselves as the public see them, they would pray heartily for a speedy annihilation. They are excrescences upon the body politic; they belong to another age, and can never amalgamate with the materials of the present generation. The public want not their services, and would be heartily glad to get quit of their demands. For a long time this borough has been taxed in various shapes, by one of these self-represented authorities; and, without any equivalent, immense sums have been extracted from the people visiting Preston. These pretended dues were never publicly defined, and the man who farmed the tolls had constantly to contend for his demands. Every means, but those of justice, were made use of to compel payment; and I well remember, that the neighbourhood of one of the toll bars was a constant scene of litigation and strife, which were often terminated by physical strength. Lying or evasion, in order to cheat the toll man, was considered no sin by the carters. Disgusted with so much imposition, and with such a riotous mode of collecting the toll, a number of tradesmen,

carriers, &c. determined to resist the demand, and forthwith joined in a bond, to try the question, and to bring the dispute to a final issue. These persons have constantly refused to pay tolls for about four years, and though the corporation commenced actions against one or two of them, they have not, though fairly invited, dared to bring the matter to a trial. This is a great triumph, and has been a saving to some individuals as much as forty pounds a year. But notwithstanding this salutary check, they still employ a *catch* at each end of the town, and get what they can from those who are timid enough to pay. Thus a corporation, respectable as individuals, but corrupt as a body, continues to make claims which can neither be demanded by justice nor the charters of the town, and employs agents to interrupt and to badger the poor carters out of their hard-gotten money.

The souls of all corporations are alike, hence at Wigan, I have been told, the old fashioned, summary, method of seizing by the waistcoat collar is still kept up. At Lancaster south bar I have stood several times to watch the game. The collector, who is also landlord, seems gifted with admirable tact for the business. He is weight for the best of them, and as the people in those parts are not sufficiently *anti*-corporated, they seldom prolong the dispute. They cheat him if they can, but if detected, durst not refuse to pay. At Chester, these demands are so evaded and frittered away, that they are scarcely worth collecting, and I was told, that at a meeting lately held to consider the propriety of abandoning them altogether, this laudable purpose was lost by a majority of one. The abandonment of these tolls would be a grand thing for the country, and no person would suffer, excepting the doctors, who would have fewer gouty subjects to attend to. The great *Russelling* comet of reform is beginning to be visible in the heavens, and, if but the tip of its tail should touch some of these protuberant bodies, so inflammable are their substances, they are sure to ignite, and a joyful explosion we shall have. May the "schoolmaster" hasten it in its time.

Institution for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.—It may not be known to persons at a distance, that in Preston we have an Institution under the above designation, which is generally allowed, considering the population, to be second to none in the kingdom. Though of little more than two years' standing, it can boast a commodious reading room, a respectable museum, a good stock of philosophical apparatus, a constant supply of the

most popular lectures, and a splendid library, containing 1700 volumes, many of which are of first rate excellence. The room is open for reading and the delivery of books every day from noon till half-past nine at night; and several classes meet for mutual instruction on different evenings in the week. The number of members is about 600, and the average number who actually paid last year was 551. Members are admitted upon the recommendation of another, without any previous notice, and the charge is only 6s. 6d. per year, or 1s. 7½d. per quarter. The funds are in a prosperous state, and altogether, the original promoters cannot but be gratified to see the unexpected result of their well intended labours. I hope, in the language of the committee, "the town will long continue to enjoy those intellectual and moral benefits which it is the great object of this institution to impart." Mr. Frankland Lewis is delivering, this week, to the members of this Institution, a course of lectures on *Astronomy*, on the usual terms. An institution of a similar character has recently been established at Chorley. I wish it every success.

Religious Advertisements.—Amongst the number of large advertisements which at this season of the year appear on the walls, announcing the anniversaries of societies and the preaching of charity sermons, I am glad for once to be able to bestow unqualified praise upon that connected with the parish church. It is a simple, modest announcement, that a sermon will be preached on such a day. Here is no puff about *services*; no popular names and honorary titles to attract a large congregation; and above all, *no charge for entrance*. The Methodists still stick to this "silver," but it is now introduced with so much diffidence, and accompanied with such nice, soft words, that it disarms all hostility. The Catholics have varied the thing a little; they will take either silver or copper, but the amount must not be less than "sixpence." Ah! what chance of entrance would there have been for their first pope, who declared, "silver and gold have I none,"—or for the Head of the church himself who said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has not where to lay his head?"

The comparative results of the sermons and services in favor of the national school and the catholic school, confirm what I have often said, that *spontaneous liberality* is but a rare article. To secure a good collection, there must be a *performance*, or some sort of sensible excitement.—For the former, £26 was collected;

for the latter, £76. A great part of the difference, I presume, was owing to the entrance money, and to the presence and support of the Preston Choral Society.

The Reform Bill.—The final success of this measure, which was once extremely doubtful, is now certain. But how different do parties view it in its consequences! Its warmest admirers view it as a perfect panacea, and, from its passing, promise themselves the commencement of an era of national felicity. The opposite party denounce it as revolution, and affect, at least, to forbode the results as terrible. I think it is probable that both parties go to extremes in their anticipations. I have always maintained, that the result of good laws depend principally upon the character of those who administer them; and until we have a reformed constituency, and persons of reformed characters for our representatives, many of our expectations will never be realized. Still I think this measure will give a decided turn to the tide of influence in favour of the best interests of the nation; and, if coupled with, or followed up by, such regulations as would secure *purity of election*, it will still be more acceptable. I repeat here, what I have before suggested, that I would expunge the word "polling" altogether; and, after the example of the House Commons, would ascertain the minds of the voters simply by a *division*. Few places will contain as many voters as Preston, yet, in the area of the Exchange, it would be perfectly practicable. By this mode the real sense of the electors would be ascertained, for those who felt indifferent or wished to stand neutral, would keep away. Suppose the doors open at eight o'clock, and the court to open at ten. The nominations and speeches would last perhaps two hours; during all this time, admit every person whose name was found in the regular register. This done, if more persons be nominated than the borough returns, let the doors be locked, and at the order of the returning officer, let the electors divide successively, according to the number of candidates, which, by the means of tellers, would decide the election at once. I think every reflecting person will see in this plan a cure for many of the evils which, on the polling system, will always attach to elections. Indeed, the register is the principal thing; with this, and scrupulously admitting *none but voters*, the election, except when the numbers were nearly equal, might be decided by a show of hands. The whole would be over by one o'clock. J. L.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the Moral Reformer.

Bolton, 18th May, 1891.

SIR,

IN your last number I stated, through mistake, that some individuals in the church enjoyed from six to sixteen livings and preferments. It ought to have been from six to ten. To prove that this statement is correct, I will subjoin an extract from the *Black Book*, p. 27—being the authority from which I derived my information. After giving the number of Sees, Chancellorships, Deaneries, Archdeacons, Prebends, Rectories, Vicarages and Chapelries, &c, it proceeds, "Thus there are twelve thousand three hundred and twenty seven places of preferment, divided among seven thousand six hundred and ninety four individuals, affording nearly two for each. This extraordinary monopoly of offices accounts for the vast number of pluralities. The whole number of incumbents in England and Wales is, seven thousand one hundred and ninety one; of this number two thousand eight hundred and eighty six hold two or more rectories, vicarages, and chapelries. From data in the *Ecclesiastical Dictionary*, we have drawn up the following classification of parochial patronage, exhibiting the number of parochial preferments enjoyed by each.

"*Parochial Patronage*, shewing the number of individuals, and the number of rectories, vicarages and chapelries, held by each:—

Number of Individuals.	Livings held by each.	Total No. of Livings.
1.....	11.....	11
1.....	8.....	8
5.....	7.....	35
12.....	6.....	72
64.....	5.....	320
209.....	4.....	836
567.....	3.....	1701
2027.....	2.....	4054
4305.....	1.....	4305
7191		11,342

A. H.

To the Editor of the Moral Reformer.

SIR,

I have read the gentlemanly letters, in your last number, in reply to my remarks on the Manchester Cigar Divan. It is not my intention to trouble you with a long rejoinder,—a few words will be quite sufficient.

I would beg to inform Amicus Justitiae, that all his suppositions respecting me are by the mark; and that my views of the sanctity of the sabbath extend a little beyond his; at least as it respects reading the newspapers, and the company whom I should expect to meet at a Cigar Divan.

With regard to your other correspondent, Ultor, I have only to remark, what first attracted my attention was a demy placard, hung at the outside of the door, announcing that the Cigar Divan was then open; and that I had come directly, without loss of time, from a place of public worship about three hundred yards off, where the service had not been unusually long. As to what is said respecting the time of divine service, I have only to remark, that I know of no authority admissible in matters of this sort, which makes any distinction between one part of the Lord's Day and another.

A MANCHETSER MAN.

To the Editor of the Moral Reformer.

SIR,

It has been remarked, that the use of undefined words by early theological writers, has been one cause of the laborious disputes of latter times. And it is very true, that a clear understanding of the meaning of words, is of the first importance, either in acquiring knowledge, or communicating instruction. The patrons and teachers of many of our Sabbath schools, however, have either disbelieved this maxim, or, from want of consideration, have failed to act upon it. The children have been taught to read the scriptures,—chapters, hymns, and catechisms, have been treasured in their memories, they have regularly frequented the house of God, and exhortations have been addressed to them in their schools; and, if they had understood all this, an invaluable benefit had been conferred on them. But they have not understood it, and one reason was, they did not know the meaning of the words employed.

It is a gratifying reflection, that much attention has been directed of late to the mental culture of sabbath scholars, and many valuable helps have been published; but, with children who had been previously neglected, and those of country villages especially, general questioning on chapters and catechisms, is of small utility; it is rearing a fabric without examining the foundation: general questions are useful as a means of drawing attention to a particular object, but it is instruction in the meaning of the words brought under notice, that is advantageous. For instance, I have asked, "For what did Christ die?" and received for answer, "To save sinners." But upon further examination, the boy could not explain the words "sinners," and "to save;" the explanation however of these terms was the most profitable part of the instruction, as it brought the subject to a practical and individual bearing. I subjoin another instance.—A young man of respectable abilities took a friend's class on a sabbath, and the answer

to the twenty-ninth question of the Assembly's Catechism was repeated by the scholars, in order to its being explained. The repetition was accurate, and several general questions were answered without much difficulty; but when he came to enquire respecting their knowledge of the meaning of the words, with the exception of one boy who had received superior instruction, the word "redemption," was the only one of which they had any knowledge.

But these are by no means the least favourable descriptions of the mental sterility to be found in our country sabbath schools. Cases have come under my observation, and I have received similar testimony from others, that boys, who had been previously destitute of intellectual instruction, have read a passage correctly, yet, on a question being asked upon a verse just read, and in the exact words of the former part of it, the latter part of which would be the answer, they have not been able to give the answer. Now, there is surely not an individual to be found, who, upon discovering such consummate ignorance, would not condemn, in the most unqualified manner, a mode of teaching, by which boys who had been advanced to read in the New Testament, should be so completely devoid of mental power; but such a mode of teaching in a sabbath school, where instruction is employed as a moral agent, is a perfect monster: it possesses a human voice, but the whole of its other parts are bestial, and the sooner the monster is destroyed, the better. Indeed, it is surprising that its existence has continued so long, and that with the many striking proofs of the ignorance and immorality of the lower classes, the inefficiency of our sabbath school tuition has not been exposed, and removed. Surely another generation will not pass under the same stupifying process; let us set ourselves instantly and earnestly to the use of such means only as have a direct tendency to promote the great objects we have in view,—so shall our sabbath school instruction prove a real blessing,—so shall a future generation as it were lift up their hands in astonishment at the stupidity of a system once denominated instruction. The infant schools demonstrate that the mind of a mere infant may be stored with a valuable stock of knowledge, while the child is yet scarcely able to read; why then should readers be found of twelve or fourteen years of age, whose minds are less furnished than the minds of these infants?

But the greater part of sabbath school teachers, having been trained on the old plan, are in a great measure incapable of imparting mental instruction, and must themselves first be taught. Of this I had an impressive illustration lately. I remarked to one of our teachers, a young man who, like others, had been taught only to read, but who is now anxious to understand what he reads, that he may instruct others, that the greatest obstacle in communicating instruction to the scholars was, their ignorance of the meaning of words. He replied, he found it so; and added, it was the greatest hinderance to his obtaining knowledge; that he had become a subscriber to the World newspaper, and, being anxious to know the debates on the reform question, had sometimes read a paragraph several times over, but met with so many words of which he did not know the meaning, that he knew not the arguments either for the measure or against it. I advised

him by no means to pass a word in reading that he did not know, without searching a dictionary for its meaning, however slow such a method might render his progress. I ought to add, that this young man makes himself useful in his class to the extent of his abilities, and this is more than can be said of many others. Let not teachers rest satisfied when their scholars have read a chapter or repeated a task correctly, but ascertain by easy conversational questioning, if they are any wiser, and especially, if they know the meaning of the *words* of the lesson; we cannot expect that teaching to make them *better*, which does not make them *wiser*; and remember, a few ideas are considerable, compared with none. The assistance which teachers may derive from books is great and valuable, but I would caution them against asking questions verbatim from any book, as it is much better to form their method according to the state in which they find the minds of their scholars; and by the disuse of helps in the school, they will be compelled to come prepared, and thus their own understandings will be greatly improved. I have seen most of the catechetical works for sabbath schools, and I give the decided preference to Mr. Gall's: his catechisms, with their Keys, Helps to the Gospel, and Introduction to the Helps, are all of them very excellent and useful works, and I cannot conclude this paper better, than by earnestly recommending them to the notice of all engaged in sabbath instruction, and anxious for its success.

I am, Sir, Yours &c.

A TEACHER.

PRUDENCE.

To the Editor of the Moral Reformer.

SIR,

THERE is perhaps no virtue which is more essential to the prosperity and happiness of man, in whatever condition of life he may be placed, than PRUDENCE. Unless men conduct their affairs with discretion, they will find themselves frequently involved in difficulties, and suffer much anxiety and distress. To the labourer, whose means are very limited, and who is so much dependent upon his own exertions for his sustenance, this consideration has many and strong claims to his serious consideration. There are three very prevalent breaches of this duty, sources of much embarrassment and misery, to which I wish particularly to call his attention. The first is that of *credit*, the second, *pledging*, and the third *imprudent and premature matrimonial connexions*.

Those labourers who pursue a system of credit may be arranged into three classes. The first, such as are honest and industrious, and whose means are adequate to the supply of their necessities. The second, such as are induced to have recourse to the system, as a temporary measure, when

they are out of employment, or subjected to some unwonted cause of increased expenditure ;—and the third, such as are indolent and fraudulent, and who adopt it in order to procure an idle subsistence, with a dishonest intention of cheating those who trust them. Such are the people to whom the small shopkeeper has to dispose of his goods. From the first he usually receives punctual weekly payment ; from the second, protracted instalments ; and by the third, he suffers grievously. Under such a system the shopkeeper's losses must be very considerable, and they must either be made up by exorbitant profits, exacted from his honest customers, or bankruptcy would inevitably ensue. The tradesman's choice is thus limited to undue exaction, or certain ruin. If he adopts the former, his honest customer is obliged to contribute to the support of the base and indolent a large portion of the product of his industry ; and if he do not, the shopkeeper's creditors must do so. Thus, in either case, fraud is committed, and vice is fostered ; and it is unreasonable to suppose that, in very many instances, the tradesman will choose that expedient which will be most to his own advantage : and that, consequently, the industrious and upright artisan must be the sufferer. If this system of credit were not supported by the first class of customers that I have mentioned, it would speedily fall into disuse ; so that upon the honest and respectable artisan, unwittingly rests the chief responsibility, and the greatest part of the evil of this impolitic, injurious practice. Besides, by this system, the shopkeeper is compelled to purchase his articles on credit also, at a great disadvantage, the burthen of which again is thrown upon the consumer. By this practice too, the labourer prevents himself from going to the best market for his goods, even if he chose, for he has expended his wages before he receives them, and is obliged to take them to pay for what he has already consumed, and must throw himself upon the confidence of the tradesman for another week's supply ; and should sickness attack him, or his employment fail, he is entirely at the mercy of his creditors, and perhaps will remain so during the remainder of his existence, without the power of resenting any insult to which he may be exposed. How much better then would it be for the honest labourer to disengage himself from this highly imprudent practice, and purchase the necessaries of life when he has the means of present payment ! By this means he would maintain his independence, would avoid exorbitant charges, cease to encourage fraud, indolence, and dissipation, and would insure credit when he might be in absolute need ; and he would thus also confer no small obligation on the shopkeeper, by rendering him likewise independent of his creditors, and enabling him to purchase his wares at a great advantage. I really cannot conceive what advantages this deserving class of people can see in the present system ; for my own part, I have sought for them in vain, so that I am disposed to think if there are any, they must be very trifling, whilst the evils are very conspicuous and great. It may have some advantages to the second class ; but if they could possibly avoid the system, I think they would find it much to their advantage ; for when they are once involved, their escape will often be difficult, and sometimes impossible. The chief gainers by the

system, and those to whom alone it is really useful, are the third class, and they would lament if it were abolished,—perhaps, the only mourners over its fall.

The second great improvidence of the working classes, in many cases, results from the former. I allude to Pledging. The labourer, when thrown out of employment, is often unable to procure his wonted weekly provisions from not being possessed of the means of making his customary payments; his children must be supplied with food, and his shopkeeper is urgent for the discharge of his debt, and as a miserable expedient his wife is dispatched to the pawnbroker's to borrow a small sum of money upon some personal security, for which he has to pay an enormous percentage. Many I am aware adopt the system with this pretext; some perhaps from fancying they can discern in it an advantage; but by far the greatest majority rashly sacrifice future comfort to present gratification, and will embrace any expedient which promises present enjoyment, however pregnant it may be with future evil. Such are not only improvident, but slaves to their passions, and to them reason would plead in vain; so that I can entertain no hope of inducing them to relinquish the system. But I would willingly persuade myself that there must be many among the great numbers who pursue this practice, who would relinquish it if they could be impressed with a just view of its disadvantages and degradation, and in the hope that some such may peruse this letter, I am desirous of very briefly noticing its evil effects.

If I am rightly informed, the pawnbroker exacts upon his loan 20*l.* per cent, and charges for the tickets of the articles pledged $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.* for a sum of 5*s.* 1*d.* for 10*s.* $1\frac{1}{2}$ for 15*s.* 2*d.* for 20*s.* &c. Every time the loan is renewed, the same sums are charged for the tickets; and though the borrower has only had the use of the loan for one day, he is obliged to pay a percentage of 20*l.* for a month. Is it not a strange inconsistency, Sir, in our legislature, that laws should be enacted to prevent usury in lending large sums of money, a provision which can only protect those who are in the higher or middle classes of society, while such an usurious system as that of pledging should be permitted to deprive the poor man of such large sums of his hard earned wages? Why are men permitted to take such an unjustifiable and cruel advantage of the poor man's imprudence, ignorance, or vice? Why is such a system allowed to pollute a christian country? Religion has cursed it, humanity views it with grief, reason turns from it with abhorrence, and poverty bleeds by it at every pore. If I use strong language, it is because the magnitude of the evil demands it. Can any one see the miserable and degraded women skulking into these abominable repositories to pledge their husband's clothing, and even in some cases the bed linen which is all they have to protect themselves and children during the night; weekly to redeem and repledge the former, and daily the latter; and consider the sums the deluded creatures pay for the use of what was once their own—can any one consider all this, Sir, and remain unimpassioned?

The object of laws ought to be to protect the weak against the oppressions of the strong,—the poor against the tyranny of the rich,—and the

simple and ignorant against the wiles of the knave and the crafty. Yet in the laws that relate to usury in this country, we find the strong, rich, and intelligent, protected against any undue imposition, while the weak, poor, and simple, are suffered to become a prey to those who are disposed to take advantage of their miseries. These however are considerations for the legislature, and I must therefore return to the effects of the system upon the poor, which they may prevent by relinquishing the practice altogether, but cannot modify while they continue it.

The common practice of pledging is to deposit goods in the hands of the pawnbroker at the beginning of the week, to obtain a loan upon them, and to redeem them at the termination of the week, by refunding the money which has been advanced upon their security, with the customary interest. If the goods are pledged and redeemed weekly, and a loan of 10s. obtained upon them, a penny is paid for the ticket, and twopence for a month's interest. Thus at the end of the year, for the loan of the sum of 10s. the poor man has to pay 13s. or 130*l.* per cent. If many who pursue this practice were told that one of their more wealthy neighbours had borrowed of another 100*l.*, which he returned at the end of the year, and had given 130*l.* for the use of the money, besides having been obliged to attend weekly upon the usurer, losing much valuable time, and incurring much vexation, insult and degradation, would they not think that their neighbour had taken leave of his senses? And yet this is precisely their case, except that the sum is smaller in the one instance than the other, which cannot by any means diminish the imprudence and folly, as their limited income may more than counterbalance the difference. But supposing a person pledges and redeems his bed linen daily for 10s., (which I am told is no very uncommon circumstance) then at the end of the year for the use of 10s. he will have to pay the enormous sum of 4*l.* 11*s.* 3*d.* or above 900*l.* per cent. Is it possible, Sir, that any rational being can be induced to submit to such imposition? Had I not known that such is the fact, I should, for the sake of humanity, have utterly denied it. The poor perhaps do not know the extent of the injury they inflict upon themselves by this proceeding, in preventing the assistance which many charitable people would willingly extend to render their situation more comfortable. I know it to be a fact, that it is a common observation when any clothing, bed linen, or other articles essential to domestic comfort, are solicited from the wealthy, "Whatever we do for the poor is of no avail, if we clothe them ever so well to-day, to-morrow our gifts will be on the pawnbroker's shelves, and they will be as wretched and as ragged as ever!" What reply can be made to such a remark? No one can doubt its truth, and under the present practices of the poor, no one can wonder the rich are indifferent to their misery.

If any who are addicted to the practice should read this letter, let me beg of them as rational beings to submit no longer to such a flagrant breach of prudence, not to suffer themselves to continue to pay so exorbitant an usury,—not to value their hard earnings so lightly, as to pay so large a portion of them into the usurer's coffer,—not to continue to damp the wishes, and restrain the hand of the charitable, by so imprudent a measure,—not

to permit their wives to spend their valuable time among the dissolute wretches who frequent the pawnbroker's shops, where their morals can hardly escape contamination, and their minds suffer much degradation. Can they think of the sharer of their toils, the partner of their joys and griefs, the mother, the guardian, and the moral instructress of their children, skulking into those pernicious repositories, conscious that they are about to commit an act that the world has stamped with disgrace, and fearful of observation? Can they think of them exposed to this degradation, with indifference? I would hope out of thousands, some few may have a sense of honour and prudence remaining, and could even these be induced to consider their true interest, every friend of the poor would sincerely rejoice, and none more than

Yours respectfully,

H.

P. S.—Having perhaps already trespassed beyond the limits of a letter, I must leave the consideration of the last breach of Prudence to which I have alluded until some future opportunity.

BETTERING THE CONDITION OF THE POOR.

The following letter, though written for another publication, is inserted in the *Reformer* as being exactly in accordance with the general tenor of the work. Though it proceeds upon a recognition of the present poor laws, it is clear that the sort of societies here recommended, if properly detailed, might be soon made to supplant them.—*Edit.*

EVERY reflecting person, governed by the principles of humanity and religion, must be convinced that in the present state of society there exists a great degree of poverty and distress. And this is often made to cover the practices, and sanction the pretensions of a numerous race of impostors. Mendicity, carried on by deception, is practised to an alarming extent, to the annoyance of every respectable family, and often to the injury of those who are really deserving. While the law has been unable to suppress the practice of begging, the legal provision raised by the parishes has also been found inefficient to meet the varying necessities of the deserving poor:—hence so many charitable institutions supported by a liberal public, which are a strong testimony as to the necessity of something more than parochial relief. Each of these institutions, however, generally refers only to one particular in the long list of human sufferings; and these are not calculated to meet those *varied* causes of distress which are constantly occurring.

Under these circumstances, societies for *bettering the condition of the poor upon general principles*, it is conceived, are very desirable. Under a

judicious arrangement, a society of this sort, bending its mode of operation to the peculiar cases which may occur, would not only be calculated to do extensive good to the poor with moderate means, but would form a strong check upon mendicity and imposition. Numerous applications are made, almost every day, at the doors of the opulent, and in most cases the relief or the refusal is given in painful uncertainty. It is too much to expect that persons can either have the means or the time requisite for investigating any proportion of the cases which come before them. The object of this society is therefore two-fold.

First—To relieve the distresses, and improve the condition of the deserving poor.

Second—To discourage mendicity, to detect imposition, and to remove that unnecessary annoyance to which every respectable family is at present exposed.

The plan would be, first, to divide a town into districts, and to appoint suitable agents in each. By which means a free intercourse would be established with the poor, many cases of extensive suffering which are at present passed over without assistance would be noticed, and the unworthy practices of numbers who depend on charity would be brought to light. All urgent and distressing cases might be relieved in such a way as circumstances might require, either by food, money, nourishment, clothing, or bedding. Ordinary cases, by assisting them in their applications to their parishes, and defending them from the oppression of their overseers—by seeking out fresh sources of employment—by recommending to situations such as are sober and industrious—and by any other mode which the benevolence of the subscribers might suggest. In case of an unusual pressure of the times, such as we have more than once witnessed, such a society would be an established organ, through which the public might dispense its bounty, and escape that imposition and deception to which every sudden attempt to relieve the poor is liable.

One part of the plan might be to keep a depot for old cast off clothes, and for a few new articles purchased at a cheap rate. Numbers of poor men with large families, who have not a decent thing to wear on a Sunday, might be furnished in a way most suitable to their circumstances. The Sabbath, to many, is a season only of close confinement; being destitute of any other clothing except their working clothes, which are generally dirty and ragged, they shame to be seen by their neighbours. To assist such would be worthy the attempt of every benevolent mind.

With such a profusion of blessings bestowed upon us by the Father of all, can we be content while numbers in our own neighbourhood are left, unnoticed, to grapple with all the miseries of poverty and disease? What a pleasure there is in making a poor family comfortable! and how pleased they are to be noticed, advised, and assisted by those in the upper ranks of life! There is no want of means; if some would give their time, some their advice, and others their money, the object here proposed would easily be accomplished.

REFORM IN CHOOSING COMMITTEES.

To the Editor of the Moral Reformer.

SIR,

My former communication having been inserted, I am encouraged to address you again. My present subject is, the usual way in which committees for literary institutions, benevolent societies, &c. are formed. At the institution of a society, the persons selected to constitute their officers for the first year, are nominated by some leading individuals, and their names are mentioned at a general meeting, for the approval of members or subscribers. To none of these circumstances do I mean to start any objection. At the end of every following year, one half, or a certain proportion of the committee men who have been least able to attend, go out of office. Then the remaining committee men nominate such a number as shall make up the deficiency, and here the mischief commences. For who does not perceive, without any extraordinary degree of penetration, that this system affords a fine opportunity for restricting office to certain families, or parties, or classes of persons? And he must have moved within a very narrow circle indeed, who has not had sufficient evidence that opportunities of this kind have seldom been suffered to pass unimproved for any considerable length of time. Hence it is, that the management even of our Sunday schools, and Sunday school libraries, become, in very many cases, little close boroughs, to the privileges of which no person, whatever qualifications of other descriptions he may possess, can be admitted, unless he belong to the right clan.

It may perhaps be said that members, or subscribers, have the opportunity of objecting at the annual meeting. Perhaps they have; but such a mode of proceeding would be most unpleasant, and sometimes even dangerous. The best that an objector could expect under these circumstances, would be to have him self designated a person of "bad spirit," for which he should never be forgiven.

The evils resulting from this close borough system, in the management of religious, benevolent, or literary institutions, are by no means inconsiderable or of trifling consequence. It certainly has the effect of depriving societies or associations of those talents, and that information which, in many cases, there can be no doubt, might be brought to bear upon the welfare of such institutions. It must be obvious, that a society ought to derive all the advantage that might be obtained from the knowledge of its various members; and that these persons, whatever their professions may be, who, by their narrow minded or selfish policy, circumscribe office within their own families or immediate connections, are really enemies to the institutions, whose prosperity they ought by all means to consult and promote.

Again, the proceedings which this communication is meant to condemn, are calculated, in no slight degree, to destroy that general interest amongst members or subscribers, which ought to be most sedulously cultivated. It should be borne in mind that institutions, such as I here allude to, are in general voluntary associations, and that it requires a very strong degree of benevolent feeling to insure the continued support of those persons who are systematically and very obviously excluded from any office or honours, except that of paying their money.

The fairest and most satisfactory mode of choosing committee men, deputies, and representatives, is by a general ballot. Here every member, subscriber, or qualified person has not only then an opportunity of assenting to the choice of officers, but of giving in the names of those very persons whom, above all others, he deems most eligible; and if, after the names are collected, those persons who have the most votes, and express a willingness to serve, are considered as the officers for the ensuing year, you are likely to obtain all the efficiency which the institution or association affords.

A MANCHESTER MAN.

 JOHN WALKER, PRINTER, CHURCH-STREET, PRESTON.
